

1005.0 - ABS Corporate Plan, 2020-21

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Summary

Foreword



Foreword

The ABS remains committed to delivering high-quality, relevant and trusted official statistics, data and insights to inform Australia's important decisions. This Plan reinforces the strategic directions outlined last year and updates the enterprise-level objectives.

The work program will continue to be demanding for the duration of this Plan. In 2020–21, work to inform the government response to COVID-19 is continuing, along with the ramp-up of preparations for the Census of Australian Population and Housing in August 2021. The 2021 Census will be a key area of activity for some years. Large scale testing is ensuring our processes and systems can deliver a smooth experience for the people of Australia. Significant effort will follow after the Census to generate and release information to inform a broad range of public policy and other important decisions.

The existing work program is also returning to more normal levels of activity as our field survey work progressively resumes. The Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study for the Department of Health will also contribute to our work over a number of the forward years. The demand for new statistics will continue as stakeholders expect more frequent and relevant information. The ABS continues to balance the production of high tempo output and the collection of enduring statistics.

The ABS will continue to focus both on quality of deliverables and protecting privacy. The Australian community expects and trusts the ABS to protect the information it provides while making information more available to those who wish to access it for research, investment, policy development, and public debate. The ABS is committed to managing data safely and securely.

Statement of Preparation

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the normal planning cycle was interrupted and release of the ABS Corporate Plan 2020–21 was delayed to December 2020 to allow management effort to focus on priority statistical production. This decision reflected the Department of Finance's requirements for all Commonwealth entities. For the first half of 2020–21, the ABS worked to a set of pandemic-specific objectives to ensure operations continued to generate new sources of information about the effects of the pandemic on individuals and businesses, while prioritising the safety and well-being of our staff and survey participants.

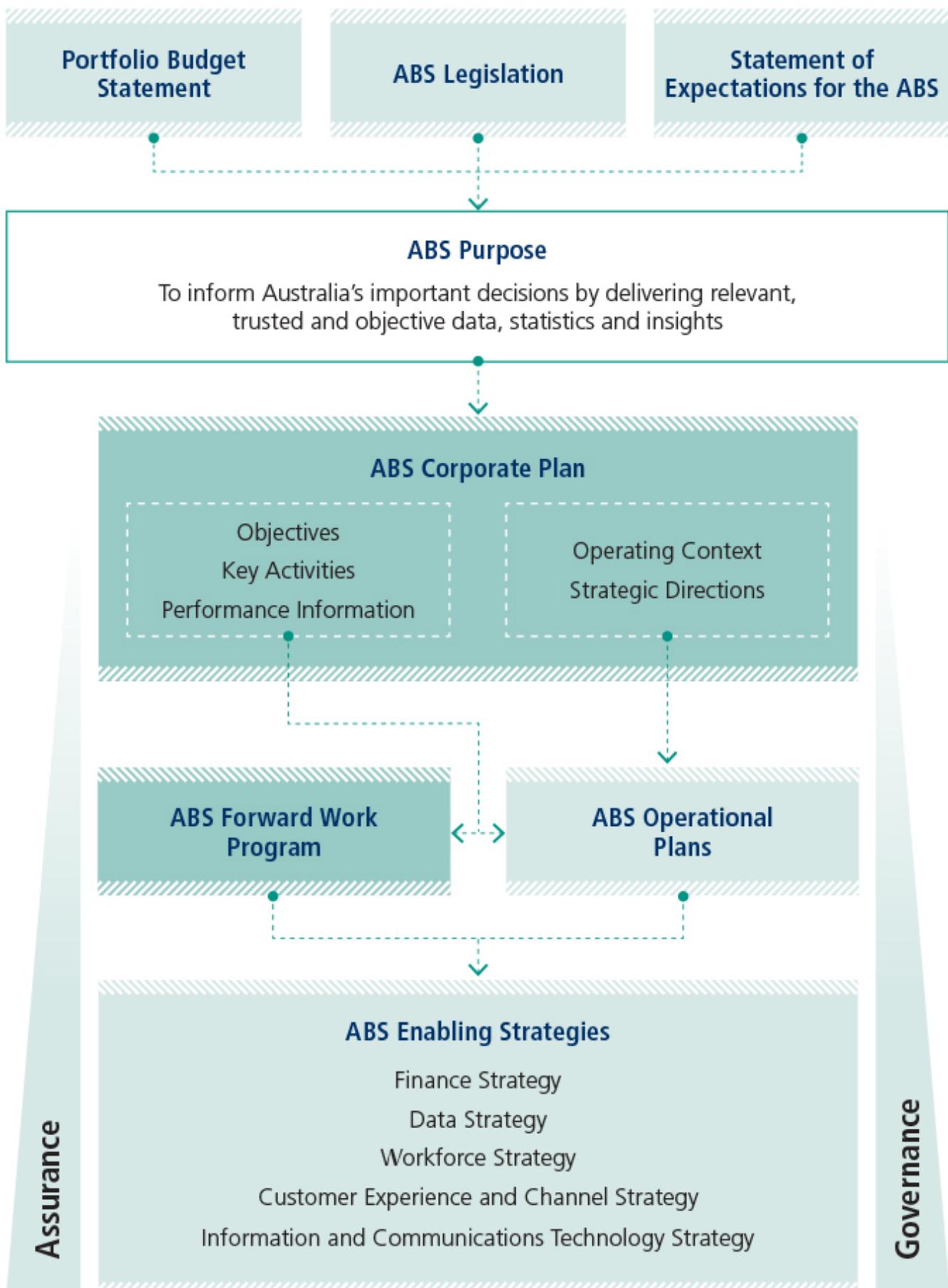
As the Accountable Authority of the ABS, I am pleased to present the ABS Corporate Plan which covers the period 2020–21 to 2023–24, in accordance with the requirements of section 35(1)(b) of the **Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013**.

Dr. David Gruen
Australian Statistician

ABS Enterprise Planning Framework

The ABS Enterprise Planning Framework ensures the objectives, strategies and key activities over each four-year planning period support ABS' obligations established in the **Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975**, the **Census and Statistics Act 1905**, the Outcome and Purpose as described in the Portfolio Budget Statements, and the expectations of government. This framework also describes the enabling functions to meet ABS' obligations under the **Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013**.

ABS Enterprise Planning Framework



Description of image

This flowchart shows the connections between components of ABS Enterprise Planning Framework. At the top of the flowchart sits the Portfolio Budget Statement, ABS Legislation and Statement of Expectations of the ABS. These components inform the ABS' purpose and in turn this purpose shapes the ABS Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan comprises the following elements: objectives, key activities, performance information, operating context and strategic directions. The objectives, key activities and performance information inform the ABS' Forward Work Program and its operational plans. The operating context and strategic directions also inform ABS' operational plans. The Corporate Plan, Forward Work Program and operational plans are supported by the following ABS enabling strategies: Finance Strategy, Data Strategy, Workforce Strategy, Customer Experience and Channel Strategy and Information and Communications Technology Strategy. The framework is reinforced with effective governance and assurance.

Elements of the ABS Corporate Plan

The ABS Corporate Plan articulates the ABS' purpose, operating environment, approach to key aspects of work, high-level objectives and activities, and the targets against which performance can be assessed. The ABS Corporate Plan meets the requirements of the **Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013**.

Elements of the ABS Corporate Plan

ABS Purpose

To inform Australia's important decisions by delivering relevant, trusted and objective data, statistics and insights

Operating Environment

ABS Culture and Capabilities

Risk Management Framework

Objectives

1

Produce
high-quality
statistics

2

Improve
access to
ABS statistics

3

Reduce
burden on
data providers

4

Produce
new statistics
and data

Key Activities

Performance
Measures

Targets

Diagram description

This diagram shows the connections between elements of the ABS Corporate Plan. These elements are required by the Public Governance and Accountability Rule 2014. At the top of the diagram is the ABS' purpose. This purpose directs the ABS' objectives, key activities, performance measures and targets which in turn are encompassed by the ABS risk management framework, supported by the ABS culture and its capabilities and sit within its operating environment.

About the ABS

Purpose

To inform Australia's important decisions by delivering relevant, trusted and objective data, statistics and insights.

Role

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency. It provides trusted official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population and environmental matters of importance to Australia.

The ABS has important leadership roles in maximising the use of public data for statistical purposes and improving the Australian Government's statistical capability. The ABS advises official bodies on producing and using data and statistics, formulates standards, and works with states and territories and internationally.

Legislation

The primary functions, duties and powers of the ABS are set out in the **Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975** and the **Census and Statistics Act 1905**.

- The **Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975** establishes the ABS as an independent statutory authority and legislates its main function as the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and provider of services for state and territory governments.
- The **Census and Statistics Act 1905** empowers the Australian Statistician to collect statistical information on a broad range of demographic, economic, environmental and social topics and contains strong provisions to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act.

Values

The ABS upholds the Australian Public Service Values. Its employees are:

- Impartial - they are apolitical and provide the Australian Government with frank and timely advice based on the best available evidence
- Committed to service - they are professional, objective, innovative and efficient. They work collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and Government
- Accountable - they are accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of ministerial responsibility
- Respectful - they respect all people, including their rights and heritage
- Ethical - they are honest and trustworthy, and act with integrity in all they do.

Culture

The ABS has an inclusive culture which is collaborative, accountable, agile, innovative, and customer focused. The ABS ensures it understands the needs of users and providers of its data, and seeks to bring out the best in its people to enable them to deliver outstanding customer service.

The ABS is committed to inclusion and diversity through engagement, support, participation, development and wellbeing, and representation in leadership. This commitment enables the ABS to make the best use of its staff's special skills and qualities so they are able to perform at their best.

Collaborations

The ABS cooperates with a wide range of government and private entities to provide access to big data and develop enduring data assets to support policy and researchers.

Government and private entities are increasingly collecting and storing data. These new data sources present a significant opportunity for the ABS to develop new statistics and insights, while reducing the burden placed on businesses and households. The ABS collaborates with organisations to inform the production of official statistics, develop enduring data assets that support researchers, and develop joined-up solutions with partners.

The ABS cooperates with the Australian Taxation Office; The Treasury; state and territory registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages; the Departments of Home Affairs; Health; Education, Skills and Employment; and Social Services; the Australian Electoral Commission; Australia Post; the Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. The ABS manages and oversees these collaborations through memorandums of understanding, deeds of agreement, statements of intent, and commercial contracts.

Capability

The ABS is committed to creating a collaborative, accountable, agile, innovative, and customer-focused organisation. The ABS has developed enabling strategies to strengthen its capabilities, which cover its workforce, finance, data, customer experience, and information and communications technology.

The ABS has a capable, resilient, agile and highly engaged workforce. The objectives of the ABS Workforce Strategy are to: Increase the capacity and capability of the ABS; identify, monitor and predict where specialist and general skills and knowledge are required; support innovative ways of working to achieve high performance and efficiency; and improve ABS' position as an 'employer of choice'. The ABS of the future requires strong leadership at all levels, a diverse workforce with capabilities in data analytics, cyber-security and artificial intelligence, and an inclusive workplace culture. In 2020-21 and beyond, the ABS will build people capability by:

- further embedding high performance behaviours in ABS leaders through improved management and performance frameworks, and learning and coaching opportunities;
- investing in managers to support work in increasingly flexible working environments;
- further embedding a safety culture and practices that underpin physical and mental wellbeing;
- recruiting to address critical and in-demand skillsets including data scientists, data analysts, methodology specialists, cyber-security and augmented intelligence;
- leveraging the new APS-wide 'Data Professional Stream'; and
- redeploying skilled staff to high priority areas, including 2021 Census, through

operational workforce planning and internal mobility programs.

The ABS is enhancing its capabilities to leverage big data sources, use artificial intelligence and computationally intensive methodologies. The ABS will expand its already world-class methods to represent, store, manipulate, integrate, and analyse large datasets. The ABS continues to collaborate with international statistical organisations to ensure its methods for producing high-quality and timely statistics are world best practice.

Through its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy, the ABS is modernising its ICT in order to support the production of high-quality statistics, provide a platform for innovation, and deliver future-focused technical capabilities. The production of new information on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the delivery of components of this modernisation.

The ABS has enabled activity-based working across all its offices to ensure teams can work virtually and flexibly. Learning from its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ABS is working to embed new and innovative flexible working practices in a way that provides longer term benefits to individuals, teams and the organisation.

The ABS will maintain its expertise in domestic and international standards, classifications and frameworks to ensure it continues to produce consistent, reliable and high-quality statistics.

The ABS will continue to build and refine the Australian Business Register and Address Register. Both of these registers are critical foundational tools that allow the creation of common frames for most survey work, including the 2021 Census.

Risk Management

The ABS approach to risk management emphasises strong ownership of risk by individual business units and an investment in risk management proportionate to each unit's risk profile.

Governance arrangements support good communication of risks among business units and enable collective responses to common and critical risks. These arrangements also support the effective escalation of high risks while empowering line managers to deal with lower-level risks.

The ABS enterprise risk management framework continues to evolve to better capture risk and allocate responsibility for its management. Enterprise risk stewards operate in support of Deputy-level risk owners by scanning the risk environment, collaborating with senior managers across the organisation, and informing risk assessments with accurate and timely business intelligence.

ABS Enterprise Risks

- A.** The ABS repeatedly or significantly fails to deliver high-quality statistical products and services.
- B.** The ABS repeatedly or significantly fails to meet customer needs.
- C.** The ABS is unable to access the critical non-survey data it needs.
- D.** The ABS is unable to protect the data it holds.
- E.** The ABS experiences a reduction in social license and/or loses the confidence of

Government, the Parliament and other key authorising entities.

F. The workforce (quantity, capability and/or capacity) is insufficient to deliver quality ABS products and services.

Operating Environment

Operating Environment

The ABS operates in a complex environment characterised by increasing demand for faster and richer data, and a relative shortage of data-skilled people.

In 2020–21, the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to have a profound impact on Australia's economy and society. The ABS is playing a pivotal role in measuring the impact of the pandemic with a range of high frequency statistical products that will continue to inform its social and economic impact.

The ABS has a continuing obligation to deliver core statistical products that are critical to government, business and the Australian community. This necessitates the direct collection of household and other survey data not available through other means.

In early 2020, the ABS ceased face-to-face household interviews to protect the health and safety of households and staff, and delayed some business surveys to reduce the reporting requirements on businesses. This provided the opportunity to fast track the use of alternative ways to collect information, such as e-forms, and test the quality and availability of other data sources. In 2020–21, the ABS will continue to respond to changes in the external environment and resume face-to-face interviews when it is safe to do so.

Collecting data from households is becoming more challenging and expensive as the attitudes and lifestyle habits of individuals and families change over time. People are more mobile and their contact details change more frequently. The ABS is making better use of technology to contact, identify, and engage survey participants remotely in order to respond to these changes.

Using big data provides the ABS with opportunities to deliver more granular statistical products more frequently, to meet some of the increased demand for its data and statistical products. The ABS continues to invest in international best-practice methods for the secure storage, processing and dissemination of statistics.

The ABS is a leader in Australia's data environment and is leading the development of a data profession for the Australian Public Service (APS). In September 2020, the Australian Statistician was appointed Head of the Data Profession. The APS Data Profession seeks to lift the capability of the APS workforce to generate deeper insights to inform decision-making in policy development, program management and service delivery.

Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions

The Government's Statement of Expectations for the ABS requires the ABS to carry out its functions in a way that ensures it maintains its reputation as a world class statistical agency,

and supports and promotes the efficient and effective delivery of official statistics and statistical services for Australia.

The ABS' Strategic Directions provide guidance to staff and stakeholders on the highest priority areas of endeavor for the ABS. They are shaped by the external environment and consultation with ABS partners and stakeholders.

1. Continue to invest in the production of high-quality data and statistics

The ABS will continue to invest in its people and use contemporary statistical methods, processes and technology to deliver high-quality data and statistics. The ABS will also continue to review its products and services and consult with stakeholders to ensure its data and statistics meet the needs of the Australian community.

2. Be recognised as a leader in the Australian data landscape

To increase public benefit from data, the ABS will lead government on best-practice methods for data collection; use; management; and protection.

3. Demonstrate leadership in data skills and capability building across Australia.

In response to existing gaps and a growing demand for people with data analysis and statistical skills, the ABS will be an important part of Australia's data analysis capability.

4. Deliver new data solutions and services

The ABS will continue to innovate and deliver new data solutions and services to provide fresh insights and help solve complex policy problems. It will do this by making better use of the data it collects, improving access to its data and statistics, and working in partnership with others.

Objectives and Key Activities

The ABS objectives respond directly to the Government's Statement of Expectations for the ABS, the **Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975** and the **Census and Statistics Act 1905**. The Government's Statement of Expectations requires the ABS to operate independently and objectively and in a way that maintains its reputation as a world-class statistical agency. This Statement also requires the ABS to appropriately align its work with key government policy objectives, be accountable and efficient, engage with stakeholders, and collaborate with other government entities. The **Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975** and the **Census and Statistics Act 1905** set out the primary functions, duties and powers of the ABS.

Objective 1 - Produce high-quality statistics

ABS data and statistics inform important decisions made by governments, business and the wider community. They underpin sound fiscal and monetary policies and inform the delivery of programs and services vital to the wealth and wellbeing of Australians. The ABS produces statistics on the health and educational engagement of Australians, the cost of living, housing, environmental management and the use of energy in Australia.

ABS data and statistics also support a strong well-functioning democracy. In particular, ABS data contributes to fair electoral boundaries by accurately showing the relative population growth of communities in different locations and changing population densities. Just as

importantly, ABS statistics provide accurate information on a range of matters critical to public debate.

The detailed ABS statistical work program for 2020-21 is provided in ABS Forward Work Program

Key Activities

Economic, Industry and Environmental Statistics

During 2020–21, the ABS will continue to deliver a range of economic, industry, agricultural and environmental statistics.

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen the fastest and largest fiscal response to an economic event in Australia's history, with hundreds of individual policy interventions being announced across all levels of government. During 2020-21, the ABS will continue to review and explain the COVID-19-related impacts in its statistical publications. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ABS developed vital, new statistical series including the Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia, Business Impacts of COVID-19 Survey and Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey.

Population and Social Statistics

The ABS population and social statistics program produces information about Australia's population, including size and composition, and measures of social and economic wellbeing. The ABS will continue to deliver these statistics, particularly its quarterly population estimates —which are required by legislation.

In 2020-21, the Time Use Survey is being conducted for the first time since 2006. The survey collects information about how Australians balance their time between work, family, leisure, caring and other activities. The survey informs important decisions about employment, families, child care and volunteering.

Over the next three years, the Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study will collect information on the physical and mental health of the Australian population. The survey will provide data to enable Australian Governments and other providers of health services to better develop and coordinate health services. The Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study is the largest and most comprehensive health survey conducted in Australia and is being undertaken in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health.

As part of measuring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australian households, the ABS is undertaking an extraordinary cycle of the Survey of Income and Housing throughout 2020–21. Estimates will provide information about changes to household income, wealth and housing costs. The survey will provide further information on financial stress by income level, household wealth, employment, family makeup, age and geographic location.

Social and Economic Impacts of COVID-19

In 2020, the ABS developed a range of new, high frequency statistical products to inform stakeholders about the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These products included new surveys, interactive maps, preliminary estimates and short-term indicators. The ABS will evolve these products in 2020–21.

The monthly Business Impacts of COVID-19 survey will continue to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business revenue, operating expenses and workforce. The monthly Household Impacts of COVID-19 survey will continue to measure the impacts of

COVID-19 on households, including responses to health messages, financial stress and emotional and mental well-being.

The ABS will continue to produce the Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages release as a weekly estimate of changes to job numbers in, and wages paid by businesses who report to the Australian Tax Office through Single Touch Payroll (STP). The ABS has developed an interactive map using this data—Weekly Payroll Jobs Interactive Map—which examines percentage change in payroll jobs since Australia recorded its hundredth case of COVID-19 in mid-March 2020.

2021 Census of Population and Housing

During 2020–21, the ABS is continuing preparation for the next Census of Population and Housing, to be held on 10 August 2021. Preparations included an operational readiness exercise in October and November 2020 to test the preparedness of ABS staff, systems, processes and vendors.

During this period, some 100,000 households in Sydney, Adelaide, Darwin and Canberra and the regional centres of Karratha and Warrnambool were invited to participate in a major test of the Census. This test assessed whether the 2021 Census is easy for people to complete and will produce quality data. It has also provided insights into the efficiency of completing and submitting the Census (both online and on paper). The ABS will continue to assess alternative data sources, including big data, for their potential to enhance the value and operational efficiency of the Census.

2020–21 Agricultural Census

During 2020–21, the ABS is preparing for the next Agricultural Census. This census will be dispatched in July 2021 with results expected to be released mid-2022. The ABS will collect information about agricultural production in Australia from some 100,000 agricultural businesses. This information will include the size of land holdings, number of livestock kept, types of crops grown, and use of water. The ABS will also collect information about the contribution of agriculture to the national economy.

The ABS will use 2020–21 Agricultural Census as an opportunity to further modernise the way it produces agriculture statistics. The ABS is working with industry and government to better integrate data collected from this census with data on levies and earth observation data. This will reduce the reporting burden on agricultural businesses without affecting the quality of official statistics produced.

Objective 2 - Improve access to ABS statistics

ABS data and statistics are a valuable national asset. There are many users of ABS data and statistics including government entities, local councils, public and non-for-profit organisations, academics, researchers, students, businesses and local community groups. The ABS is committed to improving access, while ensuring privacy and confidentiality is maintained.

Key Activities

The ABS will continue to provide access to statistics through a range of avenues, including the ABS website, the DataLab, TableBuilder and customised data requests.

In 2020–21, a new website is making statistics accessible to users' systems through an application programming interface (API). Machine-to-machine access provides a fast avenue for regular users to import data into their systems.

More microdata will also be released to the virtual DataLab which supports researchers to

undertake complex research work more efficiently.

In March 2020, the ABS published its first edition of the Australian Statistician's Analytical Series. Articles from this series bring together data from key ABS economic and social statistical releases, and business and household surveys in one place to provide insights into topical economic and social developments. These articles take either a wider view of a set of issues or an in-depth view of a particular issue, and are tailored to address community concerns and interests at the time of their release. This series will continue in 2020–21.

To increase awareness of ABS statistics, the ABS will continue to use social media platforms to engage with the Australian public, and proactively engage media and industry. The ABS will release a range of snapshots and infographics on its social media platforms which provide notice of key upcoming releases and highlight interesting statistics.

Objective 3 - Reduce burden on data providers

The ABS has been actively reducing the burden on data providers over the past decade and there is more to come. The ABS is committed to:

- improving engagement with data providers, reducing the time required to complete surveys, and reducing the number of surveys a single business or household is selected for each year.
- increasing its use of big data, including data collected by government and the private sector, to reduce the need to conduct surveys.

The ABS is implementing new online survey forms to reduce the effort required by businesses and individuals providing data and enable them to respond more quickly to data requests.

Key Activities

The ABS is exploring opportunities to simplify reporting for businesses. In 2020-21, the ABS will start a series of trials to investigate options for reducing regulatory burden. These trials will investigate options for:

- streamlining and automating data submission processes for large businesses, noting that currently, large businesses may be asked to provide data for over 50 collections a year;
- enabling small and medium businesses to report data using existing mechanisms such as business accounting software; and
- reducing the reporting burden on businesses by enabling other Commonwealth entities to use data already provided by businesses to the ABS.

Objective 4 - Produce new statistics and data

The ABS engages with key stakeholders to ensure its data and statistics meet their needs. Last financial year, the ABS rapidly produced new statistical products to meet the critical demands of government and business for health, employment, consumer spending and other relevant information during the COVID-19 pandemic. This effort was welcomed by stakeholders and will continue this year. The ABS is also investing in new ways of integrating data and using new sources to produce statistical products that meet demands not currently met. This will continue work to address important social, environmental, economic, health, and other issues.

Key Activities

The ABS is committed to maximising the value of public data and statistics. One way to do this is to combine data from two or more sources—referred to as data integration.

The ABS is an Accredited Integrating Authority for combining data, providing access to authorised users via highly secure ABS systems, and safeguarding privacy in collaboration with its partners—ensuring that no individual person is likely to be identified.

The ABS will continue to support the analysis of integrated data. Specifically:

- Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE) combines business tax data information from ABS surveys and other big data over time to provide a better understanding of Australian businesses and the economy.
- The Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) is a partnership among Australian Government agencies to develop a secure and enduring approach for combining people-centred information on healthcare, education, government payments, personal income tax, and population demographics (including the Census) to create a comprehensive picture of Australia over time.

For 2020–21, approved ABS and collaborative projects supported through BLADE and MADIP include:

- Further developing high-quality business linkage infrastructure
- Administrative data research for the 2021 Census of Population and Housing
- Feasibility studies: using microdata from the MADIP to help inform and evaluate government products and services relating to Disability, Ageing, Carers, and Mental Health, and vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Validating government payments benchmarks for use in the ABS Survey of Income and Housing
- Direct measures of capacity to contribute (CTC) for non-government school funding
- Responsive COVID-19 impact analysis through the Treasury 'Real Time Tracker' (RTT)
- Trade Performance and Labour Market Analysis Using Graphically Linked Integrated Data Environment (GLIDE)
- NSW Their Futures Matter

During 2020–21, the ABS will be undertaking a series of research projects to provide greater insights into productivity in the non-market sector. This will include developing experimental estimates of productivity for schools, universities, and hospitals (including market and non-market components).

The ABS is also exploring new data sources and the development of more monthly economic indicators. The initial areas of focus will be on using Single Touch Payroll (to generate a monthly indicator of compensation of employees) and Business Activity Statements (to generate a monthly indicator of industry output). This work program will expand to include scanner/web scraped data (for monthly prices) and other big data sources as they become available.

The 2021 Census will include new questions about long term health conditions, for example arthritis and diabetes; and service in the Australian Defence Force. These questions will address two areas of significant information demand such as that for small populations and in small geographic areas.

Performance Information

In 2020–21, the ABS revised its purpose and objectives to better reflect its priorities, and ensure the performance measures and outcomes of key activities align.¹ Last years' objectives, performance measures, methods and targets can be viewed online in the ABS Corporate Plan 2019–20.

Objective 1 - Produce high-quality statistics

1.1 Trust in ABS Statistics - level of trust in the ABS and its statistics

Method	Target	Years measured
Community Trust in ABS Statistics Survey (CTASS)	At least 85% level of trust in ABS and ABS statistics	CTASS is conducted every five years; with the next survey scheduled for 2025
Number of statistics released free of significant errors ²	100% of statistics are released free of significant errors	2020–21 to 2023–24

1.2 International compliance - ABS statistics meet standards for National and International Accounts, Labour Force, Unemployment, Consumer Price Index, and Estimates of Resident Population

Method	Target	Years measured
Compliance with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) ³	IMF assess ABS to be 100% compliant with SDDS for in-scope collections	2020–21 to 2023–24

1.3 Conduct the Census⁴ - implementation of the Census to deliver trusted Census data

Method	Target	Year measured
Successful completion of the 2020 Census Test	2020 Census Test is completed, and the evaluation report agreed and accepted by the Census governance forum	2020–21
Response rate to 2021 Census	95% response rate	2021–22
Independent survey of user sentiment toward the 2021 Census	80% of the community support the Census	2021–22
Validation of the quality of 2021 Census data by the independent Assurance Panel	2021 Census data is of a comparable quality to previous Censuses	2021–22
Release of the first statistics from the 2021 Census within 12 months of Census night	First release of Census data occurs before 10 August 2022	2022–23

Establish plans for 2026 Census	Plans for the 2026 Census have been established and verified by the Census Assurer	2023–24
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Objective 2 - Improve access to ABS statistics

2.1 Access to ABS data and statistics - access to data products and services

Method	Targets	Year measured
Composite index of channel access:	Index benchmark (100)	2020–21
• Calls to Application Programming Interface service	102	2021–22
• Number of DataLab sessions		
• Invoices for customised data services	106 ⁵	2022–23
• Count of ABS website hits		
• Registered users of TableBuilder	108	2023–24

Objective 3 - Reduce burden on data providers

3.1 Burden on survey respondents - time taken to complete business surveys

Method	Targets	Year measured
Average time taken (in hours and minutes) for survey respondents to complete business surveys	No target - establish benchmark	2020–21
	0 percentage point decrease on benchmark	2021–22
	6.5 percentage point decrease on benchmark	2022–23
	13 percentage point decrease on benchmark	2023–24

3.2 Efficiency of statistical operations - improve efficiency with which data is collected

Method	Case Studies	Years measured
Case studies showing efficiencies made in collecting data for statistical purposes	Case Study 1 Combining reporting requirements to reduce burden and duplication - ABS use of Economic and Financial Statistics data to replace some components of the Quarterly Business Indicators Survey.	2021–22 to 2023–24
	Case Study 2 Modernisation of the methodology used for Business Longitudinal	

Analysis Data Environment (BLADE). This new high-quality business linkage infrastructure will provide more timely integration of data, quarterly business activity statement updates, and richer data.

Objective 4 - Produce new statistics and data

4.1 Stakeholder impact - new statistics or methods are used by customers to inform high-priority areas or policy directions

Method	Case Studies	Years measured
Case studies showing the outcomes of new statistics or methods used to inform high-priority areas and new policy directions	Case Study 1 Implementation and use of COVID-19 household and business surveys. Case Study 2 ABS use of de-identified big data to support the NSW Their Futures Matter project. This data will support the evaluation of the effectiveness of public policies and interventions for vulnerable children and young people within NSW, and identify characteristics of families and people with poor long-term outcomes.	2021–22 to 2023–24

1. The ABS made changes to some of the methods it will use to calculate performance against targets. In addition, for some new quantitative measures, the ABS will be establishing a benchmark to compare performance improvement in future years. These new quantitative performance measures will not have a specific target for 2020–21. The ABS will more fully explain these changes to its performance measures, methods and targets in its 2020–21 Annual Performance Statement which will be published in late 2021 as part of its 2020–21 Annual Report.
2. An error is significant if it could mislead a user as to the value of a statistical indicator of national or state importance.
3. <https://dsbb.imf.org/sdds>
4. Each Census is implemented over a five year period and as such, targets for this measure change each year to reflect the major phases of Census. Targets relevant to the years covered by this Plan are included here.
5. This significant increase over the 2021–22 target reflects the likelihood of high levels of interest in 2021 Census releases.

ABS Forward Work Program

The ABS Forward Work Program provides the schedule of statistical releases over the next four years. This program does not include experimental estimates and research papers produced. In addition to the official releases listed in this program, the ABS generates a significant number of customised data products to meet the needs of specific clients.

This program was developed through extensive consultation with government, key stakeholders including users of statistics, other government entities and a range of non-government organisations such as community groups and industry bodies.

The statistical work program is classified into three tiers to assist with prioritising resources. This tiering was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

Tier 1 Statistics that are considered to be the foundation work of a national statistical organisation.

Tier 2 Important areas of statistics where there is a significant government outlay or where there is a significant public policy interest.

Tier 3 Other important statistical work that is currently undertaken to meet identified user requirements that could be deemed as falling beyond Tiers 1 and 2.

Forward Work Program 2020-21 to 2023-24

Release	Tier	Year of Release				Release Frequency
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	
Labour Market						
Average Weekly Earnings	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Six-monthly
Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation	T2		✓		✓	Two-yearly
Characteristics of Employment	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Employment & Earnings, Public Sector	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Industrial Disputes	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Job Vacancies Survey	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Jobs in Australia	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Labour Account	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Labour Force Status & Other Characteristics of Families	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Labour Force Survey	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Participation, Job Search & Mobility	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Retirement and Retirement Intentions	T2		✓		✓	Two-yearly
Survey of Employee Earnings & Hours	T1		✓		✓	Two-yearly
Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia (COVID-19)	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Fortnightly
Weekly Payroll Jobs Interactive Maps (COVID-19)	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Work Related Injuries	T2			✓		Four-yearly
Economic Accounts						
Australian National Accounts: Finance & Wealth	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure & Product	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Balance of Payments & International Investment Position	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Government Finance Statistics	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Economic Indicators						
Australian Industry	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly

Assets and Liabilities of Australian Securitisers	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Building Activity & Engineering Construction	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Building Approvals	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Building Characteristics	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Business Impacts of COVID-19 Survey (COVID-19)	T2	✓				Monthly
International Trade in Goods & Services	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Lending Indicators	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Managed Funds	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Mineral and Petroleum Exploration	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Private New Capital Expenditure & Expected Expenditure	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Quarterly Business Indicators	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Research & Development Expenditure	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Retail Trade Survey	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly

Price Indicators

Consumer Price Index	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
International Trade Price Indexes	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Producer Price Indexes	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Residential Property Price Indexes	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Selected Living Cost Indexes	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Wage Price Index	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly

Demographic

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Life Expectancy	T2			✓	Five yearly	
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Population Estimates & Projections	T2			✓	Five yearly	
Births & Deaths	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Causes of Death	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Household & Family Projections	T1			✓	Five yearly	
Life Expectancy	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Marriages & Divorces	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Overseas Arrivals & Departures	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Overseas Travel Statistics, Provisional	T3	✓				Monthly
Population Projections	T2			✓	Five-yearly	
Quarterly Estimated Resident Population by State, including net Overseas Migration	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly ¹
Regional Population Statistics	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Australian Historical Population Statistics	T3			✓	Five yearly	

Australian National Accounts

Australian System of National Accounts	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Distribution of Household Income, Consumption & Wealth	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Industry Multi-Factor Productivity Estimates	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Input Output Tables	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Modellers' Database	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
State Accounts	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Supply Use Tables	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly

Environmental & Sectorial

Agricultural Census	T2		✓			Five-yearly
Agriculture Commodities & Production	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Energy Use & Electricity Generation	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Environmental Indicators	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Motor Vehicle Census ²	T3	✓				Yearly
Survey of Motor Vehicle Use ³	T2	✓				Two-yearly
Tourism Satellite Account	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Waste Account	T3	✓				Yearly
Water & Energy Accounts	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Water Supply and Sewage	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly

Social Statistics

Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset	T3				✓	Five-yearly
Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey	T2			✓		Four-yearly
Crime: prisoners, criminal courts, crime victimisation, recorded crime	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Cultural Attendance & Participation Survey	T3		✓			Four-yearly
Gender Indicators	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
General Social Survey	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Household Expenditure Survey	T1		✓			Six-yearly
Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey (COVID-19)	T2	✓				Monthly
Income of Migrants	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study	T3					Irregular
- National Study of Mental Health & Wellbeing			✓	✓	✓	
- National Health Survey				✓		
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey					✓	
- National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey - for the general population and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ⁴						
- National Health Measures Survey - for the general population and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander						

people⁵

National Health Survey	T2		✓					
Patient Experience Survey	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Three-yearly
Personal Income in Australia	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Personal Safety Survey	T3		✓					Yearly
Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies Survey	T3				✓			Four-yearly
Provisional Monthly Mortality Estimates	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Irregular
Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers	T2				✓			Monthly
Survey of Education and Work	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Three-yearly
Survey of Income and Housing ⁶	T1		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Survey of Qualifications and Work	T3				✓			Two-yearly
Time Use Survey	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Four-yearly
Work Related Training & Adult Learning Survey	T2	✓						Yearly
								Four-yearly

Census

Population & Housing Post Enumeration Survey	T1		✓					Five-yearly
	T1				✓			Five-yearly

Other

Australian Statistician's Analytical Series	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Data by Region	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Six-monthly

1. Re-based every five years following Census.
2. Final release in 2020-21.
3. Final release in 2020-21.
4. Outputs will be released in 2024-25.
5. Outputs will be released in 2024-25.
6. An extra cycle of the Survey of Income and Housing will be run in 2020-21, with results to be published in 2022-23, to help measure the impact of COVID-19 on Australian households.

About this Release

The ABS Corporate Plan outlines the role of the ABS as a national statistical agency and the future directions of the organisation.